UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Friday, 22 October 1993
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KUKAN (Slovakia)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/48/SR.15
23 November 1993
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: FRENCH

93-81901 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 109: SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE WORLD SOCIAL SITUATION AND TO YOUTH, AGEING, DISABLED PERSONS AND THE FAMILY (A/48/3 (chap. VII D); A/48/24, A/48/56-E/1993/6, A/48/207, A/48/289, A/48/291, A/48/293, A/48/462, A/48/476, A/48/484; E/1993/50/Rev.1; A/C.3/48/L.2, L.3, L.4) (continued)

1. Ms. HASSANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that in many countries the social situation was deteriorating while in others wealth was increasing. The lack of minimum living standards in the developing countries posed a threat to the whole international community. The Report on the World Social Situation (E/1993/50) demonstrated that social problems could only be solved by addressing the issues of economic development and unfair international economic relations. The realization of social development depended primarily on the degree to which poverty was eradicated.

2. The international community, including the United Nations, should work to promote respect for the most fundamental of human rights, the right to life and to minimum standards of living and spiritual welfare. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development should base its work on proposals for principles and action-oriented programmes aimed at remedying underdevelopment. The strategies proposed by the Commission on Sustainable Development for social integration, the reduction of poverty and the generation of productive employment, as well as the results of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, should serve as a frame of reference for the preparatory process. National committees and non-governmental organizations should engage in a critical analysis of the various past failures, including those in implementing the United Nations Decades for Development, the Declaration on Social Progress and Development and the Declaration on the Right to Development. Recommendations could then be drafted for incorporation in the draft declaration and plan of action to be presented by the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit for Social Development.

3. The preparations for the tenth anniversary of "International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace", which would be celebrated in 1995, offered an opportunity to safeguard and promote the role of young people in economic progress and development. The Islamic Republic of Iran had accordingly established a Supreme Council for Youth consisting of five specialized commissions dealing with education and training, leisure time, employment, marriage and social and political issues. As part of an effort for international and regional cooperation, the first International Youth Friendship Jamboree had been held at Tehran in the summer of 1993, with the participation of the States of the region and 13 member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

4. The Islamic Republic of Iran had expanded its services for the rehabilitation, protection and assistance of the disabled. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had set up a special Bureau of Support for the Employment of "Janbazan" (war disabled) and Ordinary Disabled, which was concerned with vocational training and reintegration. At least 10 per cent of the manpower employed in Iranian government service was war disabled and 3 per cent ordinary disabled.

(Ms. Hassani, Islamic Republic of Iran)

5. The United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons had made the international community aware of the needs and problems of the disabled. As part of their national development programmes, countries had begun to take steps to improve the position of the disabled, ensure their full participation in society and promote equality of opportunity.

6. She stressed the importance of the International Year of the Family, to be held in 1994, for solving problems concerning the family. The outcomes and recommendations of the four preparatory meetings, held in Tunisia, China, Malta and Colombia, should help in that, as should the International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in 1994, and the World Conference on Women, planned for 1995. In the belief that population growth was the most important factor in social and economic backwardness and increased poverty, and that protection of the environment, economic development and control of population growth were key elements in promoting better living standards at the national, regional and international levels, the Islamic Republic of Iran had organized a regional conference on family planning at Tehran, on 11 September 1993, the results of which would be submitted to the International Conference on Population.

7. In regard to ageing, she proposed that the problems of the elderly should be approached through educational programmes at universities and campaigns in the media. Young people should be made aware of the problem, funds should be invested in cultural activities for the elderly, the activities of organizations working with the elderly should be coordinated and integrated and the elderly should receive financial support and social services. The establishment of communication at the international level among organizations concerned with questions of ageing, the promotion of cooperation among experts, the development of scientific associations, and conferences and seminars at local and international levels, would help to improve the lot of the elderly. Her delegation stressed the importance in that connection of the Proclamation on Ageing. She believed that poverty could be overcome and the social situation improved through global mobilization, popular participation and political commitment. She hoped that the World Summit for Social Development would act as a catalyst.

8. Ms. VISANU (Romania) welcomed the United Nations continuing interest in social questions even as it was engaged in reform and restructuring. As she saw it, the restructuring process would have limited impact on the issues of social development and social equity. To lay the basis for sustained social development, not only would the Third Committee and other United Nations bodies have to gird themselves for the task and Governments take action at the national level, but above all, there would need to be a kind of psychological conversion on a global scale that could only come about through education. She stressed that, though she was far from underestimating the importance of the other factors, it was necessary first of all to raise world-wide public awareness of the needs of the disadvantaged, with education as the first step in planning ahead.

9. Although there was no short-term solution to social problems, the efforts made in the field of education were beginning to bear fruit. Fundamental values were moving forward: social justice, the emancipation of women, training for young people that guaranteed them full employment, family values, and concern

(Ms. Visanu, Romania)

for the elderly. In a national context marked by social problems, for the most part inherited from the former totalitarian regime, her delegation stressed the important role of education in enhancing social integration, particularly of disadvantaged and marginalized groups. Education was the bridge between an outstanding past achievement, the World Summit for Children, held in New York in 1990, and one that was to come, the World Summit for Social Development which, together with the International Year of the Family to be celebrated in 1994, would constitute one of Romania's prime goals.

10. Her delegation believed that poverty and social exclusion were problems whose severity made them a threat to democratic principles and values. She questioned the tendency to evaluate the political determination of the young democracies of Central and Eastern Europe to promote the mechanisms of the market economy in their countries by the magnitude of the social costs entailed by the reform process. The Romanian Government recognized that its determination to limit the social cost of those reforms was compounding the country's difficulties. The future would tell whether it was right to be concerned about the social consequences of its programmes of political and economic reform.

11. Mr. AGGREY (Ghana) recalled that in 1969 the United Nations had adopted the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, spelling out activities and programmes aimed at solving the most pressing social problems afflicting all countries irrespective of their level of development.

12. Various factors, (acute poverty, drought, food insecurity, environmental degradation, social strife, harsh structural adjustment measures, falling commodity prices and rising external debt) hampered the developing countries' ability to tackle those problems. Caught in a vicious circle, they had to borrow to finance their education, health and sanitation policies while a large amount of their paltry earnings were siphoned off to service their debts. That socio-economic insecurity created social tension and fostered intolerance and communal strife which, when they spilled over national borders, threatened international peace and security. In the end, human beings, far from benefiting from economic development, were victims of the social strife that resulted.

13. In view of its belief that economic growth should not be at the expense of social development and equity, his delegation had welcomed with satisfaction the Vienna Declaration, particularly its article 10, reaffirming the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights. It hoped that the international community would agree to alleviate the debt burden of the developing countries so that they would be able to free the resources needed to pursue their socio-economic and cultural goals.

14. The Organization had been entrusted under the Charter with the task of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom. In that respect, his delegation believed in an integrated approach to development where social and human development concerns were placed at the centre, and he welcomed the proposal to convene a World Summit on Social Development in Denmark in 1995 on the three major issues set forth in General Assembly resolution 47/92, namely, alleviation of poverty, expansion of productive employment and

(Mr. Aggrey, Ghana)

social integration. His delegation believed that national efforts, fortified by international cooperation, would advance the cause of social progress which had hitherto been regarded only as a byproduct of economic growth.

15. The Secretary-General, in his report on policies and programmes involving youth (A/47/349), had listed some of the problems faced by today's youth (unemployment and underemployment, teenage pregnancies, high rate of school drop-outs, drug and alcohol abuse, malnutrition and other threats to their health and well being). The logical conclusion was that the objectives of the International Youth Year were far from realization, and that the Organization therefore needed to revitalize its programmes for youth.

16. Ghana, for its part, had fashioned out programmes to inculcate in youth the virtues of love and dedication to duty, to create awareness in them about social evils that hampered their well being and to keep them as committed participants in the overall development effort of the country. His delegation hoped that the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year would offer an opportunity to develop action-oriented programmes towards the year 2000 and beyond, and thus to finally achieve the objectives and meet the new needs of youth.

17. Since older people did not tend to threaten society, ageing was not usually perceived as a priority issue demanding international action, and policies and programmes in that area were woefully limited. In Ghana, ageing was not regarded merely as the last stage in the process of dying. Thanks to the solidarity that characterized the extended family system, the aged were guaranteed pride of place in society as repositories of wisdom and knowledge and as the fulcrum of social equilibrium. It was in that light that his delegation appreciated General Assembly resolution 47/5, proclaiming 1999 as the International Year of Older Persons, in recognition of humanity's demographic coming of age and the promise it held for maturing attitudes and capabilities in social, economic, cultural and spiritual undertakings to achieve global peace and development.

18. On the issue of disabled persons, his delegation was saddened by the fact that over 500 million people all over the world were disabled, that 80 per cent of them lived in developing countries, that only 1 per cent of that group had access to basic health care and, what was worse, that about two thirds of the afflicted were women and children. It was to be hoped that the four plenary meetings of the General Assembly devoted to marking the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons would have raised awareness aimed at prevention, rehabilitation and equality of opportunities for the disabled. Ghana hoped that the question would be placed on the agenda of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development as well as on the agenda of the 1995 World Summit for Social Development.

19. His delegation noted with satisfaction the arrangements that had been made for the International Year of the Family (1994), an initiative that was all the more commendable because the family was the foundation block on which society was built, formed the basis of all societal arrangements, and contributed to stability and development in the civil polity.

(Mr. Aggrey, Ghana)

20. In conclusion, he stressed that no matter how laudable national efforts might be, they would not achieve much without the support of the international community and the abiding weight of the United Nations.

21. Mr. WAN JUNAIDI Tuanku Jaafar (Malaysia) reviewed the mandate of the United Nations in the area of social development and stressed that social development, which involved considerable investment in human resources, physical infrastructure and natural resources, thrived best in an atmosphere which stimulated sustained and rapid economic growth. It could be enhanced by suitable policies. The development of any country depended on the productivity and quality of its population. Hence the importance of the family, which was the basic institution of society. The family institution would have to be strengthened in order to make it possible to address emerging social problems such as drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, alcoholism, child neglect and abuse, destitution and vagrancy. In the increasingly borderless world, the external environment played an equally important role.

22. Social development was intrinsically linked to the eradication of poverty, which still affected 1.3 billion people. Malnutrition, unemployment, violence and threats to the environment were still among the challenges confronting the international community. In the rich nations, a moral crisis was undermining the very fabric of society. The International Conference on Population and Development, to be held in Cairo in 1994, would provide useful input for the World Summit for Social Development. Malaysia was prepared to participate in the Cairo Conference, as well as in the preparatory process for the World Summit.

23. Malaysia fully endorsed the Final Declaration of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, particularly the provisions regarding the rights of the child and the disabled. The Government of Malaysia had taken measures to protect children from all forms of maltreatment, neglect, sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as from the trafficking in and use of narcotic and psychotropic substances, and to guarantee the education and development of orphans.

24. A country's youth were its main asset. The world's youth population was declining as a percentage of total population, and it was essential to provide youth with all the necessary conditions to ensure their future and enable them to make a useful contribution to development.

25. The Government of Malaysia had accepted the proclamation on the participation of the disabled adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. During the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, his Government had taken many steps to improve the quality of life of disabled persons.

26. The recommendations of the World Assembly on Ageing, held in Vienna in 1982, were particularly important because the proportion of elderly in the population was increasing rapidly, especially in the developing world. The elderly could be useful to society, but society must protect those who needed assistance. The Government of Malaysia was committed to strengthening the family system with a view to creating a caring society. His delegation therefore welcomed the proclamation of 1994 as the International Year of the

(Mr. Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, Malaysia)

Family and hoped that the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the issue (A/48/293) would be implemented.

27. Mr. HOOGERWERF (Netherlands), speaking as a representative of the young people in his country, put forward three propositions. First, in order to make the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year in 1995 really serve to enhance the position of young people, the draft world youth programme of action towards the year 2000 and beyond must emphasize structural measures. Secondly, the United Nations, the specialized agencies and Member States must give more prominence in their activities to the norms and values which formed the starting-point of the various United Nations conventions. Thirdly, education, the chief area of youth policy, must teach norms and values based on the principle of pluralism.

28. The International Youth Year was supposed to promote a special youth policy focusing on education and employment. Yet the assessment made in 1992 by the Secretary-General (A/47/349) and in the Report on the World Social Situation 1993 (E/1993/50) made one wonder if there was really cause for celebrating the tenth anniversary of the Year: primary education had become less accessible to children in the least developed countries, in many areas girls were still at a disadvantage compared to boys, and unemployment among young people was growing because of the world-wide economic recession, while drug and alcohol abuse and criminality were taking an increasing toll among them. The good intentions of the United Nations had not yet been translated into concrete action programmes developing the three basic themes of the International Youth Year, participation, development and peace, and there was the danger that the Year would arouse only a passing interest unless the celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations gave sufficient attention to youth policy. It was also a cause for concern that young people were still treated as a group apart rather than being integrated into social policy as agents and beneficiaries, and that they were not always involved in decision-making.

29. To avoid further deterioration of the situation of young people, new policy, in particular the draft world youth programme of action, must be based on an assessment of past policy.

30. The norms and values which formed the starting-point of the various United Nations conventions must be integrated into the activities of the United Nations, the specialized agencies and Member States in order to prompt new initiatives on behalf of young people. Norms and values were passed down from one generation to the next by the family and the school, but young people were also influenced by the mass media and leisure activities. There was always a discrepancy between their values and those of the previous generation, everywhere in the world. They might choose to conform to the old norms and values or to rebel against them, but apathy was the most common reaction in the Netherlands and perhaps in the rest of Europe and in the United States as well. The young justified their attitude by the inability of the current generation of politicians to deal with the economic recession, the threat to the environment and the post-cold-war ideological vacuum. Apathy, far removed from the ideals of solidarity, was, however, not universal, and many young people wished to be participants, as evidenced in a document on the contribution of non-governmental youth organizations to the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century.

(Mr. Hoogerwerf, Netherlands)

31. Education must not be used to impose a single ideology on the young generation but must be based on pluralism, which was the interaction between cultures and generations. From that a new universal set of norms and values could emerge, based on human rights and the rights of the child.

32. If youth policy was to be effective, Member States must actively participate in the various United Nations projects without merely approving them passively.

33. Lastly, pluralism consisted of a combination of different ingredients, each of which retained its specificity while contributing to the overall flavour, as in paella, rather than of a mixture of ingredients as in a melting pot, or a combination of separate ingredients as in a salad.

34. Mr. SLABÝ (Czech Republic) observed that the liberalization of the economy and the abandonment of a paternalistic State egalitarianism in his country had produced fundamental social change: in 1991-1992, a considerable proportion of workers had changed jobs or profession. The new social policy had replaced paternalism by a system of compulsory insurance together with optional additional insurance, which was an important stabilizing factor, a system of social support focusing on those genuinely in need, and a system of social assistance aimed at combating poverty and sociopathological phenomena and protecting vulnerable groups.

35. There were 1.2 million ill, disabled, elderly or retired persons among the 10 million inhabitants of the Czech Republic. His Government strongly supported the draft resolution on Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (A/C.3/48/L.3), and drew attention to the framework for a long-term strategy to coordinate the implementation of initiatives and ideas that had emerged from the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

36. His delegation looked forward to the proclamation of the International Year of the Family, which would be formally launched on 7 December, and welcomed the intention to hold an interregional expert group meeting in early 1995 to develop appropriate follow-up strategies. In view especially of the great change in family-State relations, the Czech Republic attached much importance to the International Year and had set up a National Coordination Council for its activities, which would include specific action to assist families, as well as a more general programme in the areas of legislation, research and education.

37. As a result of the flourishing of democracy, the whole health and social welfare system of the Czech Republic had been restructured: it no longer reflected any social ideology and was action-oriented, down-to-earth and adapted to the current stage of economic transformation. The restructuring had gone hand-in-hand with other measures, such as changes in the areas of taxation and unemployment, and legislative reforms.

38. The Czech Republic was strongly committed to social development and to the principle of full participation by all. It felt bound by commitments adopted by the former Czechoslovakia in all fields, including social policies.

39. Aware of the need to promote international consultations on the social situation, the former Czechoslovakia had supported the idea of convening the

(Mr. Slabý, Czech Republic)

World Summit for Social Development. His Government intended to participate fully both in the preparations and in the Summit itself, but believed that the Summit could not address every single area of social policy. It should concentrate on identifying priorities, and on improving the United Nations capacity to deliver its social programmes. It should lead to agreements that would be likely to reduce poverty, develop productive employment and enhance social integration. The task would not be an easy one, despite the first steps made by the Preparatory Committee.

40. The transfer from Vienna to New York of the secretariat services relating to social development ought to help integrate the two interrelated aspects of development - economic development and social development - and the social development issues should be handled by a single, autonomous unit, which could perhaps be named the Division for Social Development.

41. Ms. POORT (Denmark), speaking as a representative of Danish youth, said that she would like to recall the "dream" which Martin Luther King had spoken of 30 years earlier: a dream of democracy and human rights which, for Martin Luther King, had not remained a mere vision but had been translated into action.

42. Many things had changed since then, but children and young people were still too often left out of the democratic decision-making process. The world needed young people who dared both to dream and to assume responsibility for the future of all. The world should thus give them space to dream and to act, and it should ensure their education, without which their participation in the decision-making process would not be meaningful. Unfortunately only four Member States out of 184 accorded enough priority to the future generation of decision-makers to include youth representatives in their delegations to the United Nations General Assembly. Being excluded made young people passive and indifferent and diminished their confidence in the formal decision-making process; many reacted by turning to violence or crime.

43. The democratic ideal was not simply a national concern. The United Nations needed to promote youth exchange programmes. Cross-cultural contact and mutual understanding would promote peace, out of which democracy would grow.

44. Government action was no longer sufficient: the private and voluntary sectors - of which youth organizations were an important part - must participate in the elaboration of United Nations policies. In addition, the Organization should review its policies regarding non-governmental organizations and be more open to the many local, national, regional and international organizations whose vitality had been revealed at the Rio Conference; at the same time, it should periodically review those non-governmental organizations having consultative status with the Economic and Social Council to see if they still met the conditions for that status. A more open policy towards non-governmental organizations would help to establish a link between decision-makers in New York and the people of the world, who might otherwise fail to understand the decisions made and react against them.

45. The dream was that some day all States would respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, a commitment they had reaffirmed at the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993. She welcomed the fact that the 1990

(Ms. Poort, Denmark)

Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was one of the most important instruments ever produced by the United Nations, had been ratified so rapidly by 154 Member States out of 184. She hoped that all States would have ratified it by 1995, the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child. Unfortunately, some Member States had yet to submit their reports and there was a question whether the Convention had really changed the reality for children. Denmark had amended its legislation in accordance with the Convention, in particular with regard to the treatment of juvenile delinquents. In many parts of the world, however, the Convention was still far from respected: in that connection, she cited the examples of street children and children exploited as labour or as soldiers. Abused children would become crippled adults.

46. Children were a separate category of persons and, as such, had their own rights. It was not enough to proclaim those rights; action must be taken to ensure that they were respected. Too often, UNICEF efforts had been hindered by a lack of political will and of respect for human rights.

47. According to UNICEF statistics, during the past decade alone, as a result of war, 1.5 million children had been killed, 4 million had been disabled and 12 million had been left homeless. Who should care for those survivors, if not the United Nations and, consequently, its Member States? Would it be possible to realize the dream of a world where the United Nations could establish and maintain a peace that ensured the future of children and youth?

48. Young people did not cause war, but were among its main victims. It was up to the decision-makers of the present to set aside animosity so that ethnic conflicts would not be passed on to the next generation. That might not be enough to stop all wars, but action on several fronts could be taken to make things better for youth: just a fraction of the money currently spent on weapons could be used constructively; relief could be given to those countries whose debt burden deprived them of resources to invest in youth (and also deepened the gap between North and South); the industrialized countries could lift the trade restrictions they had imposed, which, according to the Human Development Report 1992, resulted in a loss of $500 billion a year to the developing countries, while the latter received only $50 billion in aid. Aid was still necessary, however, to ensure education in the developing countries until they could profit fully from a free trade market. It was a long-term process, but there was no other solution.

49. The tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child would be observed in only two years. Substantive initiatives had to be launched immediately or that anniversary would be merely an occasion for the elaboration of visionary plans of action for the year 2000, which would most likely remain just words on paper. The United Nations needed to take stock of what had been accomplished since 1985 and consider what place had been given to young people in all the United Nations declarations and conventions. The observance in 1995 of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Child provide Member States with an excellent opportunity to include youth representatives in their delegations to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, so that their voices could be heard just like those of their elders. It would also be appropriate to establish in 1995 a forum of non-governmental youth organizations. That would be the best way to promote democracy and observe the Organization's fiftieth anniversary.

(Ms. Poort, Denmark)

50. The United Nations was on the agenda among young people in Denmark, where a United Nations week had been organized to increase understanding of the need for global cooperation and to encourage a critical evaluation of the current United Nations system.

51. If only young people were given the chance to participate in decision-making at the local, national and global levels, they would be happy to assume responsibility and demonstrate their commitment.

52. Mr. ALMANA (Qatar) said that the international community's interest in social development questions had steadily increased since the United Nations had first considered them in 1952. That was only logical considering that ensuring security and development was in fact the single noble goal of the international community and served as a justification for its very existence.

53. Protecting society meant better protection for children, vulnerable groups, the elderly, youth, women and the disabled. It was important also to protect the family, which was the basic element of society.

54. All the resolutions adopted by the Economic and Social Council, together with the declarations, programmes, guidelines and decades dedicated to a particular aspect of social development, had not been able to prevent the deterioration of the world social situation. It had been recognized that the policies followed thus far needed to be reviewed and a proposal had therefore been made to convene a summit conference for social development; thus, the General Assembly, in its resolution 47/92, had decided to convene a World Summit for Social Development, to be held in March 1995 in Copenhagen. That major international event would give the international community another chance to focus on social development and should result in the implementation of regional programmes within the framework of a world plan of action.

55. The objectives of the Summit - the alleviation of poverty, the expansion of productive employment and the enhancement of social integration - must form the foundation of any integrated economic development plan which took account of the demands of social justice. The Summit could also provide an opportunity for all States to renew their commitment to promote sustainable development and to close, if only partially, the gap between countries, regions and peoples.

56. The decision to convene the Summit had been motivated to a large degree by the realization that to maintain a synergetic relationship between economic and social progress and progress in the area of social justice promoted equality among people. Social development was a major, if not the major, objective of every national community. However, the availability of the means to attain that objective varied according to each country's situation. The developing countries were experiencing serious problems linked to poverty, unemployment and low productivity. Recently, the market economy countries had been seriously affected by the recession and unemployment, which had had negative consequences on social well-being in those countries. Those problems had also affected countries in transition, where the slow-down of economic activity had caused a slump in real incomes and had aggravated social problems to an alarming degree.

(Mr. Almana, Qatar)

57. Many countries, particularly in Africa, had had to confront natural disasters whose consequences were felt most severely by the developing countries which lacked the resources and infrastructures needed for recovery. Migratory movements linked to natural disasters, civil wars or ethnic conflicts could, considering the overpopulation of the areas in question, lead to international conflicts.

58. Poverty led to hunger, malnutrition and the disintegration of social services, which, in turn, hurt all of society. It was clear that social development could not occur without economic development. The relationship between the two might even be referred to as one of cause and effect. By adopting the Charter of the United Nations, States had committed themselves, individually and collectively, to promote "higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development". In that connection, his country devoted all due attention to social development. Indeed, the State of Qatar provided free education at all levels, including the preschool level, and guaranteed free medical and child care, without discrimination. The State also covered all expenses related to care for the disabled and the elderly. Social development had only one objective: to promote human dignity and prosperity. Nothing undermined dignity more than poverty and hunger. The only way to eliminate them, particularly in the developing countries, was to create jobs, guarantee investments and provide the means for training, since it was true that human beings could maintain their dignity only when they fulfilled a productive role in society, and they could do that only if they had received adequate education and training.

59. Mr. KASOULIDES (Cyprus) said that the preparations for the World Summit on Social Development had already made it possible to lay the foundations for a constructive plan of action, covering all aspects of social development, including the core issues which would be addressed during the Summit (the enhancement of social integration, particularly of the more disadvantaged and marginalized groups; the alleviation and reduction of poverty; and the expansion of productive employment) and which would bring social inequalities on a global level into focus.

60. The economic difficulties experienced, to varying degrees by the developing countries, the countries in transition and the developed countries, with the accompanying extreme poverty, on the one hand, and xenophobic reactions, on the other, justified the appeal made to the international community by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/92 to take concerted action with a view to attaining a balance between economic efficiency and social justice, and rethinking the interaction between the social function of the State, market responses to social demands and the imperatives of sustainable development.

61. With respect to the developing countries, while the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (A/48/50) left some margin of reasonable hope for the future of those with rapid and sustained economic growth, in other countries poverty had increased in both extent and intensity. Stable government was a factor that could help reverse that trend. In that regard, the action undertaken recently by the United Nations to facilitate democratic elections and provide electoral assistance should, in the long term, mitigate the results of internal strife and the breakdown of legitimate government.

(Mr. Kasoulides, Cyprus)

62. In the area of social development, it was important to focus more particularly on the situation of the most vulnerable groups, such as children and youth, the disabled and the elderly, with special emphasis on poor countries where those groups were even more marginalized. His country, which attached particular importance to enhancing the role of women in social, economic and political life, hoped that the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held in 1995, would review existing strategies and identify the remaining inequalities so as to create equal opportunities for women in society. The current unemployment of a sizeable number of young people was also a worrisome development that needed to be addressed.

63. His country where the family was considered to be the backbone of society hoped that the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994 would help to reinforce that institution and increase awareness of the rights and obligations of family members, particularly with regard to parental responsibilities.

64. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would adopt by consensus the draft resolution that had been submitted to it by the Economic and Social Council on the standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities (A/C.3/48/L.3). His country was currently implementing social programmes aimed at providing health care and shelter for the elderly. Population ageing was also a major issue and pragmatic policies should be adopted to utilize that sector of the population more productively and to provide more effectively for their social needs.

65. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the international community should intensify its efforts to protect children, particularly those who were poor, exploited or delinquent. Whether they were street children or children living in a country caught up in a civil war, their plight had become so critical that it should be addressed as a matter of absolute priority. Children, who represented the future of the world, were also the most vulnerable segment of the societies that made up that world.

66. Mr. MAQUIEIRA (Chile), speaking on behalf of the Latin American States members of the Rio Group, said that the Heads of States of those countries had recently, in the capital of his country, renewed their full support for the preparations and convening of the World Summit for Social Development and reaffirmed the importance they attached to the objectives set forth in General Assembly resolution 47/92, which implied that economic and social development should be viewed as an integral part of the overall development process within the context of which the political and social stability of each country was closely linked to international peace and security.

67. The World Summit for Social Development would provide the heads of State and Government with an opportunity to analyse the three core issues defined by the General Assembly, namely, the enhancement of social integration, the alleviation and reduction of poverty, and the expansion of productive employment. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, economic development alone had not yet led to greater social justice; distribution policies, for their part, had not triggered automatic economic growth. It was therefore

(Mr. Maquieira, Chile)

essential that priority be given to policies aimed at simultaneously eliminating poverty, promoting social integration and developing productive employment: only such policies could ensure that social welfare accompanied economic growth.

68. In that context, it was for the State to organize the fight against poverty by providing equal opportunity for the members of the most vulnerable social groups and enabling them to be included in development. Assistance policies could do no more than lessen effects of poverty, which could be eliminated only by involving the poor in productive projects and improving productivity to meet the challenge of competition. At the same time, the State should allocate sufficient resources to public services to provide access by the poor and should devise mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of social expenditures. Strengthening equal opportunity meant combating the marginalization, found in Latin America, for example, of major categories of the population - children, young people, old people, women, ethnic groups - by giving them the means for genuine integration into society. That was the purpose of health, nutrition and education policies and policies aimed at providing employment for young people and equal opportunity for women in the economic, political and social fields. The family must be given renewed value as the ideal framework for promoting social integration, and that integration should be based on greater participation by the individuals and groups that were the beneficiaries of social policy, which the State should decentralize.

69. As for the expansion of productive employment, the economies of the Latin American countries had to be better integrated into the world markets if the relationship between growth and competitiveness was to be made a lasting reality. It was also important to raise productivity, for job creation depended on the level and structure of growth. Investment should go hand in hand with productive and technological development policies in an effort to open up the economy and improve the labour market. Thus there was a need to define new employment policies, based on the adaptation of labour through technical training, and to resolve the problems raised by the extension of the non-structured employment sector and the need to integrate the economy of the rural areas, where most poor people lived.

70. The countries of the region knew from experience how difficult it was to reconcile development and social justice in a unilateral approach based either on the State or on the market. The magnitude of the problems to be resolved made it imperative for the State, the market and society to come together to reduce conflicts and conclude agreements that combined fairness with economic dynamism.

71. At a time when the economy and communications were becoming linked world wide, the transnational character of social phenomena such as migrations and environmental problems made it impossible to continue viewing social welfare as a national issue. On the contrary, they provided an opportunity for intensifying international and regional cooperation for social development and focusing it on the developing countries. The World Summit for Social Development should serve to bring out a common awareness and define an international framework for maintaining that awareness. It was necessary in particular to coordinate macroeconomic policies, strengthen policies on openness of markets, design financing policies and eliminate practices harmful to the environment. The Preparatory Committee for the World Summit, which would be

(Mr. Maquieira, Chile)

holding its first substantive session from 31 January to 11 February 1994, should begin consideration of those issues and define the agenda for the Summit and the instruments to be approved at the Summit by the heads of State or Government. The goals to be discussed at the Summit were so complex that achieving them would require all the innovation capacities of Governments, non-governmental organizations, society and technical experts. In that connection, the member countries of the Rio Group deeply appreciated the Mexican Government's having organized, at Oaxaca in September, a meeting on poverty and social development, in which about 100 experts on the above-mentioned problems had participated. Its results would certainly be of interest to the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit.

72. Ms. ASHIPALA (Namibia) said that the Secretary-General had affirmed the inextricable link between peace and social and economic development by stating, in the "Agenda for Peace": "The social stability needed for productive growth is nurtured by conditions in which people can readily express their will. For this, strong domestic institutions of participation are essential. Promoting such institutions means promoting the empowerment of the unorganized, the poor, the marginalized."

73. In most developing countries, persons with disabilities were among the poor and marginalized. Their disabilities were an impediment to social and economic participation. In document A/C.3/48/L.3, which contained the text of a draft resolution that the Economic and Social Council had recommended to the General Assembly for adoption, it was stated that the number of persons with disabilities in the world was large and growing. That was certainly true for southern Africa, a subregion that had been ravaged by wars of destabilization and liberation, leaving thousands of children orphaned or disabled. In Namibia, disabled people were found mainly in the rural areas, where armed conflict had prevailed during the colonial years. In the developing countries, some disabled women were heading families single-handedly, and their efforts were made even more difficult in countries stricken by drought.

74. It was a well-known fact that disabled women were the victims of discrimination based on both their gender and their disability. Despite their membership in national organizations, their voices were seldom heard. Thus her delegation looked forward to the participation of women with disabilities, especially disabled women in rural areas, in the World Conference on Women in 1995. They were the ones who could speak the best of their experience.

75. The Constitution of Namibia provided for protection of the rights of disabled people and the enhancement of their integration in the spheres of education, health, employment and accessibility. The Namibian Government was preparing detailed programmes for the provision of services to disabled persons. Through the Inter-Ministerial and National Coordination Committees, the National Organization of the Disabled had been advocating the equal rights of the disabled and stressing the need to integrate them into the education, health, sports and economic fields. Although some progress had been made, it had to be noted that the problem of the disabled in Namibia could not be resolved with the available human and material resources.

76. The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities had served as a background for a workshop organized by the Namibia

(Ms. Ashipala, Namibia)

Organization of Disabled Persons in July 1993 to consider draft legislation on disabilities in Namibia. Following the workshop, a six-member drafting committee had been established to begin preparing the draft. The drafting committee would be visiting a number of countries which already had such legislation in order to learn from their experience.

77. Namibia supported the Rules, which it believed could serve as an adequate mechanism to promote the rights of the disabled and provide the services they needed. They would herald a new form of international cooperation to alleviate the problems of the disabled, especially in the countries that had limited capacities to address those problems. For the disabled to be integrated into all spheres of society, however, societies must change their attitude towards those persons. The end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons must mark the beginning of an era of inclusion. Namibia reiterated its recommendation that persons with disabilities should sit on the Panel of Eminent Persons established by the General Assembly.

78. Disabled persons in the developing countries were making strenuous efforts to redress their social condition. To complement those efforts, regional mechanisms such as the Southern African Federation of the Disabled (SAFOD) must be given sufficient resources to enable them to render assistance at the national level.

79. The link between peace and social and economic development could not be overemphasized. Civil wars, poverty, drought, hunger and lack of health care continued to be a major constraint, especially in the developing countries. The problems of disabled people could not be resolved without reducing the gap between the haves and the have-nots. In that spirit, her delegation welcomed the World Summit on Social Development and intended to ensure that disabled persons fully participated in it.

80. Mr. PALIHAKKARA (Sri Lanka) said that the end of the cold war had created numerous opportunities and challenges for which it was difficult to prescribe appropriate strategies, but that it represented a point of departure for seeking solutions to fundamental social issues, using an integrated approach. Since it was important to address the causes of conflict and insecurity throughout the world, United Nations preventive-diplomacy strategies should embrace not only political and military aspects, but also the socio-economic dimensions of peace and security.

81. Under those conditions, it was natural for there to be strong support for the convening in 1995 of a World Summit for Social Development, which would not only be held at the highest political level, but would chart a new course of action at the national, regional and international levels to achieve growth with social justice and peace and security with equity.

82. The high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 1993 had provided an analysis of the causes and effects of social development problems and had highlighted a large measure of convergence of viewpoints. He hoped that the rest of the preparatory period would be devoted to substantive work, based on that analysis and on the high-quality documents submitted by the Secretariat, to set out the major issues for consideration at the 1995 Summit. His delegation awaited with interest the work of the two meetings of experts hosted

(Mr. Palihakkara, Sri Lanka)

by Sweden and the Netherlands, which it hoped would lead to policy recommendations. Given the all-encompassing nature of the subject-matter before the Summit, his delegation urged the Secretariat to obtain information and contributions from a wide variety of sources, including regional organizations that had already undertaken pioneering work in fields such as poverty alleviation, employment and social cohesion.

83. Sri Lanka expressed its sincere appreciation to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee, who, in his statement on 20 October, had spoken of what remained to be done before the substantive preparatory work could begin. The Sri Lankan delegation paid tribute to his diligence and efficiency, which had made it possible to reach a consensus on the organizational and substantive work of the Summit, and also commended his untiring efforts in holding consultations.

84. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) had been one of the first regional organizations to undertake target-oriented action programmes for poverty alleviation in the context of people-centred development. In that way, it had been possible to develop, at the national and regional levels, poverty alleviation strategies, which, moreover, were in fact being implemented. It was hoped that the Summit secretariat would consult with the SAARC secretariat in order to obtain information on such strategies and thus contribute to the substantive preparations for the Summit. The practical experience of one of the world's most populous subregions should be drawn upon. His delegation also drew the Secretariat's attention to a recent conference on social development and poverty, held in Mexico with the assistance of UNDP and the World Bank.

85. Social development problems were not peculiar to the developing world and, as the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (A/48/50) stressed, developed countries had also been affected, albeit to a lesser degree. In his report on the work of the Organization (A/48/1), the Secretary-General had recognized that the Organization had not placed sufficient emphasis on the social and economic sectors and stated his determination to correct that shortcoming. Promoting social development was no less important than restoring and maintaining peace since the Charter itself stipulated that it was necessary "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". It was gratifying to learn that the Division for Social Policy and Development had been established in New York, which would preclude any fragmentation in its work. He hoped that those new institutional arrangements would facilitate preparations for the World Summit and broader consultations among Member States.

86. Mr. PHANIT (Thailand) said that his Government believed that people must be at the centre of development and that development must begin with the individual and the family. Since children were treasured symbols of hope throughout the world, his Government had enacted numerous measures to ensure the security of Thai children and was currently considering various stringent penalties against child brutality, including life imprisonment or the death penalty for those who were found guilty of illegally detaining children under 15 years of age and causing their death through inhumane treatment. The Royal Thai Government had acceded in 1992 to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, it had adopted a national declaration on children for the period from 1992 to 2012.

(Mr. Phanit, Thailand)

87. Referring to a group that was all too often ignored, the Thai delegation said that disabled persons were considered integral and productive members of Thai society and that the Government had set up a committee composed of representatives of the private and public sectors to provide advice on policy, welfare and rehabilitation for the disabled. In addition, the Government provided education and training for the disabled as well as other vulnerable groups in society. It supported the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons and the World Programme of Action. It also supported the ESCAP Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002). On 16 June 1993, the Prime Minister of Thailand had signed a proclamation on the full participation and equality of disabled persons in the Asian and Pacific region.

88. The family had always represented the cornerstone of Thai culture and the guardian of its traditions. Accordingly, the Government had decided in 1990 to make 14 April National Family Day and had set up a national committee on the family. His Government fully supported the proclamation of the International Year of the Family (1994) and intended, in celebrating the event, to convene a national assembly on the family, which would submit recommendations to the Government as a contribution to national efforts to promote family development. Thailand felt that strong, unified families were well equipped to assume responsibilities towards the elderly, the disabled and children and were part of the answer to many social problems, including crime, drug abuse, mental health, education and poverty.

89. The Thai Government, like many others, understood that social development went hand in hand with economic prosperity and that the international community must pool its resources in order to achieve real economic growth. None the less, the initial impetus must come from domestic policy. Thailand strongly supported convening the World Summit for Social Development and would actively participate in the preparatory process beginning in 1994. The Thai Government had established a social cabinet for formulating policies and finding solutions to a number of social problems and had set up a joint committee, which was chaired by the Prime Minister and whose members were from the private sector and the Government.

90. His delegation supported the three core issues, to be addressed at the Summit, which were clearly interrelated: social integration, poverty reduction and productive employment. In pursuit of those goals, the World Summit must adopt not only a final declaration, but also a realistic programme of action. In order to ensure the success of the World Summit, the Preparatory Committee must prepare its work by coordinating efforts with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other world bodies; all Member States must participate actively not only at the beginning, but also during and after the Summit; and lastly, it was necessary to establish priorities within a realistic plan of action to be adopted.

91. Mr. SALANDER (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, expressed appreciation to the Government of the Slovak Republic for hosting the Conference of Ministers of Social Affairs, held in Bratislava in June and July 1993. From the European point of view, the Conference had proved valuable in view of the unprecedented changes that had taken place in the region since the previous ministerial conference in 1987. The era of confrontation had since given way to a fruitful discussion of challenges in the field of social

(Mr. Salander, Sweden)

development. While the primary responsibility in that regard remained at the national level, there was a need for a multilateral European forum at the political level to deal with questions of social policy and social development. From a global point of view, the Conference had also been useful because it had decided to submit to the Preparatory Committee its own report as well as a background document prepared for the World Summit.

92. The Nordic countries, like many others, had to cope with rising unemployment and increasing costs in the social welfare systems, combined with reduced economic growth. The challenge was to continue sustainable social development ensuring a fair distribution of social services and benefits as well as income among all people. The social security system was helping to reduce poverty and facilitate integration of disadvantaged groups into society. In many cases, particularly in the third world, those systems were not yet fully developed and covered only a limited segment of the population and a limited number of contingencies since they were highly dependent on the level of economic growth of those countries. Many countries were currently trying to follow structural adjustment programmes in order to come to grips with the imbalances in their economies. Those programmes were often characterized by reduction in public spending, leading to significant decreases in social expenditures, which in turn, worsened the situation of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups in society, at least in the short term. Two measures should be envisaged to improve the situation. First, since those that suffered most from economic cutbacks were often those who were not covered by any social security schemes, which in many third world countries were limited to wage earners living in cities (while the consequences of structural adjustment programmes were often most severe in rural areas where people lacked any kind of social protection), the "social contract" should be negotiated. In other words, there was a need to establish a consensus among the population concerning the issues of social solidarity and the redistribution of resources. Second, it was necessary to strengthen the international exchange of information and experience in the field of social security, which could help developing countries reduce the impact of the economic situation on the most vulnerable population groups.

93. In the past 40 years, life expectancy had greatly increased. Despite remarkable improvements, enormous health problems remained. Mortality levels in developing countries were still unacceptably high; and AIDS, tropical diseases and tuberculosis were widespread. All countries were struggling with the problems of controlling health expenditures and making health care accessible to the entire population. The economic recession in many countries and the ageing of the population added further to the difficulties. In the past, too little attention had been given to health, and, in development plans, health expenditures were often regarded more as a burden for the economy. The World Development Report, published by the World Bank in collaboration with the World Health Organization, strongly emphasized the role of health in development efforts. Investing in health was a means of accelerating economic development since good health increased the economic productivity of individuals and the economic growth rate of countries. That idea should be borne in mind when preparing for the World Summit for Social Development, to be held in 1995 in Copenhagen.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.